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ABSTRACT

This report describes the progress of the "Way to Grow School Readiness Program," a program implemented in several cities in Minnesota to promote intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development and school readiness of children to age 5. The program coordinates and improves access to community-based and neighborhood-based services that support and assist parents in meeting the health and developmental needs of their children. The first part of the report describes the program's background, components, and service strategies; state appropriations; and application process. The second part of the report describes in detail each of the specific programs in Minneapolis, Columbia Heights, St. Paul, Winona, and St. Cloud. The report concludes with a brief assessment of the program. (MM)

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ED 365 409

A Report to the Legislature

on

Way To Grow/School Readiness Program

Submitted

by

State Planning Agency
300 Centennial Office Building
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St. Paul, Minnesota
1991

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This report describes progress of "The Way To Grow/School Readiness Program" implemented in the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Columbia Heights, St. Cloud and Winona.

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Way to Grow/School Readiness Program

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BACKGROUND

The goal of the Way To Grow/School Readiness Program (Minnesota Statues 145.926.) is to promote intellectual, social, emotional/physical development and school readiness of children prebirth to age five by coordinating and improving access to community-based and neighborhood-based services that support and assist all parents in meeting the health and developmental needs of their children at the earliest possible age.

The components of a Way to Grow/School Readiness Program may include and address the following:

provide services to pregnant women early in their pregnancies, i.e., prenatal care, well-baby care and parenting classes;

provide neighborhood support systems that target neighborhood concerns;

work to establish networks and collaborations of existing community-based business and services to enhance programs to the targeted residents;

develop public-private collaboration to promote the development of culturally specific system of services available to all families; and

provide support to family prevention and intervention programs needed to address risks of children abuse or neglect.

Community entities using Way to Grow/School Readiness funds to develop neighborhood-based programs are designed around the following service strategies:

Home visitors who link at-risk children and their families with services and advocate for their needs;

Organize coordinated, interdisciplinary resource team of professionals focusing on the needs of families;

Identification and promotion of all local resources for all families;

Facilitate the expansion of the local service system to address unmet needs; and

Organize neighborhood-based education and training concentrating on early childhood development for parents, primary caregivers, and services providers.

Way To Grow Appropriations

The 1989 legislature approved the Way To Grow/School Readiness pilot programs (MS 145.926) and appropriated $500,000 to the State Planning Agency for the program. [The State Planning Agency was instructed not to include the appropriated amount in the budget base for the 1992-93 biennium.] The commissioner of State Planning was instructed to award grants to one pilot project in each of the following areas of the state for each year of the biennium.

> (1) a first class city located within the metropolitan area as defined in section 473.121, subdivision 2; and
>
> (2) a second class city located within the metropolitan area as defined in section 473.121, subdivision 2.

In addition, in 1989 the legislature specified that $350,000 of the amount allocated to Minneapolis under the Year of the Cities Community Resources Program was to be used for a Way-to-Grow program. These funds also were administered by the State Planning Agency.

In 1990, the legislature appropriated $100,000 from the general fund for three additional grants under the Way-To-Grow program. These grants were made to eligible applicants located outside the seven-county metropolitan area.

> (3) a city with a population of 50,000 or more that is located outside of the metropolitan area as defined in section 473.121, subdivision 2; and
>
> (4) an area of the state located outside of the metropolitan area as defined in section 473.121, subdivision 2.

Grant recipients are required to coordinate their programs with existing community-based programs serving children prebirth to age five.

Application Process

The State Planning Agency sent Requests For Proposals (RFPs) to over 500 entities utilizing mailing lists from the League of Cities, Association of Counties, state departments, and known community organizations. In addition, notices about the RFPs were printed in the State Register and major and local community newspapers.

In the first year of the Way To Grow Program, the State Planning Agency received proposals from the following cities and organizations:

> St. Paul Public School - Early Childhood Family Education
>
> Columbia Heights - Early Childhood Family Education

Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board

City of Minneapolis

City of Bloomington - Division of Health

Anoka County Community Action Program, Inc.

In 1990, the State Planning Agency received proposals from the following:

Marshall - Western Community Action Inc.

Mille Lacs and Isanti Counties - Rum River Special Education Cooperative

Willmar - Willmar Public Schools, Inc.

Goodhue County - Opportunities Services, Inc.

Winona - Winona Early Childhood Family Education

Beltrami and Cass Counties - Bi County CAC, Inc.

Blue Earth - South Central Education Cooperative Service Unit

Montevideo - Montevideo Community Education and Recreation

St. Cloud - The Parent-Child Programs of District 742

Grand Rapids - Koochiching-Itasca Action Council Inc.

In both 1989 and 1990, each proposal was reviewed and discussed in terms of its strengths and weaknesses in meeting the framework of the Way To Grow Program (i.e., good community outreach, networking, utilization of community resources, collaboration and targeting a specific population).

The State Planning Agency formed an advisory committee which reviewed proposals according to selection criteria. This advisory committee consists of current Way to Grow administrators, state agency program administrators, minority council representatives, and members of the public, all of whom have knowledge and expertise in the Way to Grow philosophy.

The selected proposals, awarded grants and sources of funds for 1989 and 1990 are as follows:

Selected Proposal	1989	1990	Source of funds
*Minneapolis	$350,000	-------	Year of Cities/-Community Resource Program
St. Paul	$250,000		General fund
Columbia Heights	$250,000		General fund
Saint Cloud		$50,000	General fund
Winona		$50,000	General fund
	$850,000	$100,000	
Total	$950,000		

MINNEAPOLIS PROGRAM

"The (mission) of the Minneapolis Way To Grow Initiative is to establish a service delivery system to promote school readiness of Minneapolis children by coordinating community-based services and programs that support and assist all parents in meeting the developmental needs of their children from conception through age six."

Goals:

Encourage families to make better use of existing community services.

Help families to build a network of friends, relatives, and community people to support them in raising their children.

Identify very early identification of physiological and environmental factors which can be deterrents to school readiness.

Identify needed services for families and children and find ways to support those services and families.

Raise public awareness about the importance of healthy child development from conception through age six and about practices that will promote healthy development.

Raise the quality of community services by providing programs with information, technical assistance, and incentives for coordination.

Minneapolis has developed Way to Grow programs in the Phillips neighborhood with Phillip's Tender Loving Care and in the Camden neighborhood. A Minneapolis Way to Grow administrator is working with the following neighborhood centers to implement Way to Grow programs: Northside Child Development Center, Southside Family Nurturing Center, Reuben Lindh Learning Center, and Sumner-Olsen Community Center. The Way to Grow administrator's objective is to use these centers and other community entities as one-stop family resources center instilled with the Way To Grow philosophy.

Columbia Heights

"The (mission) of the Columbia Heights program is to improve the school readiness of children in the Independent School District #13 and to increase the protective factors operating in the lives of young children in the communities of Columbia Heights as an antidote to the many risk factors in their lives."

The specific objectives are to: identify at-risk children ages 0-5; provide developmental screening services; provide parenting classes; provide early childhood activities for children and their parents; facilitate access to other resources such as health, housing and employment through information, referral and on-site delivery of services; and improve the coordination of services to families with young children by developing collaborative relationships with other providers.

To house the Way To Grow Program, an agreement was made between Way To Grow and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Columbia Heights to provide a house for the program, named "The Way To Grow House". [To accomplish stated objectives, the staff of the Way to Grow Program has established relationships with local service providers, and is networking with community agencies to establish collaborations to address each of the specific objectives.]

To identify at-risk children, staff canvassed various neighborhoods to reach residents of families with young children and gave printed materials to residents. They contacted and distributed materials to local agencies. They are: Early Childhood Special Education District #13, Child Protection Unit Supervisor - Anoka County, Police Department - Columbia Heights, Public Health Nursing - Anoka County and Kindergarten and 1st-3rd grade teachers, Head Start - Anoka County Community Action Program, Columbia Heights Day Care Association, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, and the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church to familiarize them of WTG Program.

To facilitate access to other resources, staff members assembled referral resources, developed brochures, acquired phone numbers and addresses to make referrals to existing programs.

Saint Paul Public School - FROGTOWN FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

This program outreach is directed toward pregnant women and parents of infants to encourage them to obtain prenatal care and health services to promote the health and development of their infants and young children.

GOALS:

To provide support, education, and linkage to health and other community services through home visits to families with young children in the Frogtown neighborhood.

To provide support, education and linkage to health and other community services through a drop-in center for families with young children in the Frogtown neighborhood.

To provide center-based educational services to parents and children to enhance the development and school readiness of children.

To increase the proportion of pregnant women, infants and young children in the Frogtown neighborhood who receive prenatal care early in pregnancy, well-child care and other health-related services.

To increase the participation of families with young children in other programs and services in the community that provide supportive services to children and families.

To improve the perception of the neighborhood and community as a place that cares about and is supportive of children and families.

To accomplish these objectives, a family resource center was established in St. Paul located at Western Street and University Avenue in the heart the Frogtown area. Named Frogtown Family Resource Center, the center began operating in July as a drop-in center for parents and children of Frogtown.

The present objectives of the center are to:

inform parents of community resources available to their families;

provide one-to-one parent education counseling to those who drop in and to promote interaction with other parents;

provide formal parent education through cluster groups during specific times during the day; examples, [Hmong cluster group addresses; mothers preparing their children for school, english as a second language, educational parent-child interaction; etc]

inform the immediate neighborhood of the center's services by canvassing door-to-door explaining the objectives of the Frogtown Family Resource Center and goals of the Way To Grow Program; and

organize home visits to identify and address family needs by linking families to appropriate community resources.

The center has established collaborative linkages with the Lao Family Community, Inc., St. Paul public schools, the Mt. Airy community, the Summit-University community, and the North Central neighborhood to address: family literacy, Lao family literacy, adult basic education, pre-school education, and prenatal and well-baby care.

Collaborative linkages have been developed with Model Cities Health Center Inc., Health Start Inc., and St. Paul Division of Health to identify, address and provide services in the areas of pre-natal care, inservice training relevant to pre-natal care, and comprehensive services for pregnant women who have been identified as substance abusers. These linkages allow identification of pregnant women without health care and the enrollment of children in a children's health plan.

Winona Way To Grow/School Readiness Program

The Winona Way To Grow Program is administered by the Early Childhood Family Education Program (ECFE) of the Community Education Department of the Winona Public Schools. The goal of the Winona Way To Grow Program is meet the needs of high risk families in the targeted areas through an intensive, individualized, collaborative program designed by local community agencies and professionals working with Winona's high risk families.

The Way To Grow project is enabling families to become self-sufficient by focusing on and building on the strengths of individual family members, building self-esteem and competency in parents and children and empowering parents to break the destructive cycles of abuse, shame and neglect which inhibits children's school readiness.

The program offers a continuum of services which are designed to meet the individual family's needs. Planning of services utilize existing community programs which assist families to build supportive networks that aid them in rearing their children.

Families are referred to the Way To Grow Program through Winona County Social Services, Winona County Community Health Services, Early Childhood Special Education, Community Memorial Hospital, Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center, Winona Clinic, Winona Adult Literacy, and the Minnesota Department of Corrections. In addition, Way to Grow outreach workers and volunteers from ECFE canvas housing projects and trailer parks to identify at-risk families. At-risk families are served in the following ways:

1. Expectant parents in the first trimester are visited by para-professional home visitors once per month and are referred to other resources for prenatal care. Home visitors work with expectant parents to provide social support and information about prenatal care, birth and parenting; they assess early childhood development and refer families to community agencies as needed.

2. Parenting classes are provided to high-risk parents during their second trimester of pregnancy to other community women with similar due dates. During the second trimester - home visitors continue to visit families twice a month and are geared to continue this visitation service until the child's second year or when the home visitor determines the family can be enrolled in regular ECFE classes and services.

3. Parent-child play groups are established for parents and their children birth to age five at various community centers. These centers provide parent-child activities, information on parenting, discipline and community resources, and positive child management techniques. Children are involved in fine and gross motor activities, story-time and creative play.

4. Problematic parents are referred to counseling and reparenting groups which are led by a counselor/parent educator, social worker/certified chemical dependency counselor.

St. Cloud - Parent-Child Program

The goal of Parent-Child's Way to Grow Program is to promote healthier family relations through support and education for parents and their young children, prebirth to age five.

The Parent-Child Program is the coordinating agency for the Way to Grow initiative and has developed relationships and agreements with local public and private community agencies to address needs of parents and children in the targeted areas of St. Cloud. Some of the relationships and agreements are as follows:

Maplewood Terrace, an apartment complex has donated use of an apartment to the Parent-Child Program for the purpose of coordinating and providing services to Maplewood Terrace residents and neighbors.

Rivercrest Estates, an apartment complex is assisting the Parent-Child Program with outreach and education and has allow the Parent-child Program to lease an apartment for the provision of services for the Adult Literacy Consortium.

Other relationships are being developed with:

1) Woman House to provide individual counseling to program participants on issues such as law enforcement, medical, legal and financial problems.

2) Community Health Services to provide program participants with early and regular health care during pregnancy and postpartum care and to connect their clients to available community resources.

3) WIC to serve income eligible pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum women and their infants and children under age five with food supplements vouchers, and to provide health screening and dietary assessments.

The following objectives of the Parent-Child Way To Grow Program are being achieved through coordinated efforts of public and private agencies. They are:

1) Outreach and Awareness of Parent and Children Programs - home visits, distribution of flyers, community agencies referrals and open house.

2) Coordination of Program Need - facilitating meeting of staff from local community agencies which promote efficient programming of local services.

3) Prenatal Care and Nutrition - public health nurses perform the following tasks: assess children for risk factors, provide prenatal care education to make referrals to WIC clinics which provide health screening of pregnant women and children under five and provide dietary and growth assessment of young children and give vouchers for supplemental foods.

4) Adult and Child Education - assists parents to meet their GED requirements; expansion of the PACE program; promotes intellectual, social, emotional and physical; identifies children with special needs and making referrals to appropriate services; and builds respectful relationships between parents and child with an emphasis on enjoying each others individuality.

Assessment of Way To Grow Programs

Way To Grow delivers services in a coordinated, (extensive) and intensive approach to meet identified community problems. The Way to Grow philosophy acts as a catalyst for local service providers in the assessment of community needs and the efficacy of their delivery system. This approach does not require new services or programs.

As illustrated in the five aforementioned programs, several of the communities which received Way To Grow funds are service providers, primarily Early Childhood Family Education programs. With Way To Grow funds, these programs identified several of the most pressing problems facing their community. The greatest problems identified are in low- income families in low-income neighborhoods. Some Way To Grow programs address community needs through small-scaled direct services; but, more Way To Grow programs build relationships with other service providers to address residents' needs.

Each Way To Grow program finds it is time consuming and difficult to get long-term service providers to cooperate, coordinate and collaborate in the provision of services. The collaboration of agencies and their resources is taking more time to develop than anticipated.

However, organizing citizens and giving them opportunities to participate in the design and implementation of programs to address unmet needs/problems of fellow residents allows for a more efficient use of resources, an effective delivery system, extensive outreach and provides a comfort level of those accepting services. By using community people to meet needs, program assistance is not viewed as only a government program and those assisted are not viewed as only a case number in a social service system.

Programs which encourage collaborative efforts should be supported until the are firmly established in the methodology of collaboration, developing networks and partnerships.